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SAIGON 0742 FLASH

DELIVER IMMEDIATELY

APRIL 20 1978

TO: HENRY A. KISSINGER

FROM: AMBASSADOR GRAHAM MARTIN

REF: WH50754

1. I HOPE YOU WILL FORGIVE ME FOR GOING BACK OVER A BIT OF RECENT HISTORY WITH WHICH YOU ARE OBVIOUSLY INTIMATELY FAMILIAR AND WHICH YOU HAVE HANDLED WITH GREAT SKILL IN YOUR PRESS CONFERENCES. NEVERTHELESS, I THINK IT IS USEFUL TO OUTLINE THIS SEQUENCE TO RELATE MY OWN VIEWS OF THE SHORT AND FAR-RANGE FUTURE TO THIS BIT OF HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE.

2. UP UNTIL LAST JUNE, WE WERE WELL ON THE WAY TO COMING OUT OF VIETNAM AS YOU WANTED, RELATIVELY QUICKLY, LEAVING VIETNAM INTACT. WHETHER IT MADE IT IN THE LONG RUN WOULD HAVE THEN BEEN UP TO THEIR OWN EFFORTS AND WOULD NOT HAVE BEEN SEEN AS THE DIRECT RESPONSIBILITY OF OUR ABRIGATION OF THE AGREEMENTS THAT WE HAD UNDERTAKEN. AS OF LAST JUNE, I THINK THE EVIDENCE IS NOW CLEAR THAT THE ARVN HAD THE MILITARY INITIATIVE AND THE OTHER SIDE HAD MADE A CONSCIOUS, DELIBERATE DECISION TO PUT THE WAR IN THE SOUTH ON THE BACK BURNER FOR AN INDEFINITE PERIOD AND CONCENTRATE ON THE NEEDED RECONSTRUCTION IN THE NORTH. I HAD PERSUADED THEM TO, IN EFFECT, ACCEPT A DE FACTO PARTITION LEAVING THE OTHER SIDE IN CONTROL OF THE AREAS THEY HELD IN WHAT SULLIVAN ONCE CALLED THE ANNAMITE CORDILLERA. AS A CONSEQUENCE, WE MIGHT HAVE REASONABLY EXPECTED THE LEVEL OF VIOLENCE IN THE SOUTH TO HAVE SHOWN A REDUCTION TO THE POINT WHERE IT WOULD HAVE BEEN MANAGEABLE AND WOULD NOT HAVE INTERFERED WITH THE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT PROCESS.

3. THEN THE BOTTOM FELL OUT IN OUR TRAUMATIC SUMMER, CULMINATING IN THE VOTING OF ONLY HALF OF THE MILITARY APPROPRIATION AND ABOUT THAT OF THE ECONOMIC AID APPROPRIATION.

END PAGE 01

*****HHSR COMMENT*****

HAK, SCONCROFT, MCFARLANE, RODMAN

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4. HANOI TOOK ANOTHER LOOK AND DECIDED TO INCREASE THE MILITARY PRESSURES. THE SOVIETS, SEIZING AN OPPORTUNITY, INCREASED THEIR MILITARY AID (UP BY FOUR TIMES IN THE FIRST QUARTER OF THIS YEAR) AND, ACCURATELY, ADVISED HANOI THAT THE PROPAGANDA CAMPAIGN BEING MOUNTED WOULD FURTHER ERODE AMERICAN WILL AND DETERMINATION TO THE POINT THAT THEY MIGHT SCORE SOME STARTLING SUCCESS. WHEN WE DID NOT REACT AFTER PHUOC LONG, THE DIE WAS CAST. THE ELECTION OF THE NEW CONGRESS, TRAN VAN LAN'S INTERPRETATION TO THIEU THAT THERE WOULD BE NO FURTHER AID LET ALONE ANY SUPPLEMENTAL, PUSHED THIEU INTO THE DISASTROUSLY EXECUTED EVACUATION OF MR'S 1 AND 2. THE MILITARY MOMENTUM ON THE OTHER SIDE, ADDED TO THE PSYCHOLOGICAL SHOCK THE SOUTH VIETNAMESE HAD UNDERGONE, BROUGHT A PREPONDERANCE OF FORCES TO THE EDGE OF SAIGON. THE ARVN DEMONSTRATED AT XUAN LOC THAT IT WAS STILL NO PUSHOVER AND THE WILL TO FIGHT STILL EXISTED. IN THE DELTA, EVERYTHING HELD REASONABLY WELL. THE CHOICE, THEREFORE, WAS BETWEEN A MILITARY SMASH AT SAIGON OR THE USE OF THE THREAT OF SUCH ACTION TO INDUCE ACCEPTABLE POLITICAL CHANGES. AS YOU KNOW, MY ESTIMATE HAS BEEN THAT HANOI WOULD CHOOSE THE LATTER COURSE. IT SEEMS THAT IT HAS AND IT APPEARS TO BE WORKING OUT REASONABLY WELL. ONE OF THEIR PROFESSIONAL DEFORMATIONS IN HANOI IS THAT THEY ARE RELUCTANT TO DEVIATE FROM A PREVIOUSLY AGREED STRATEGY. I TOOK ADVANTAGE OF THAT IN THE SIXTY SEVEN YEARS AGO IN THAILAND TO ACCOMPLISH CERTAIN RESULTS WITHOUT AMERICAN DIRECT INVOLVEMENT. IN THE PRESENT SITUATION, I HAVE COUNTED ON HANOI'S COMPULSION TO STAY WITHIN THE TERMS OF THEIR PREVIOUS STRATEGY.

5. IF BIG MINH COMES TO POWER, AS NOW SEEMS INEVITABLE, IT WILL STILL BE A GOVERNMENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF VIETNAM THAT HE HEADS. THIS GOVERNMENT, I WOULD THINK, WOULD BE REQUIRED TO BE BASICALLY NEUTRALIST, FOREGO MILITARY AID, BUT WOULD BE RELATIVELY FREE FOR A TIME TO CONTINUE, WITH THE EXCEPTIONS MENTIONED ABOVE, MUCH AS IT HAS IN THE PAST. THERE WILL BE A COMPLICATED NEGOTIATION BETWEEN THE GVN AND THE PRG OVER THE SETTING UP OF THE NCRG WHICH MAY OR MAY NOT BE CONVERTED INTO A COALITION GOVERNMENT. I WOULD THINK NOT, BECAUSE THEY COULD NOW AFFORD TO BE MORE PATIENT. I THINK THEY WILL WISH THAT WHATEVER EVOLVES BE SEEN TO BE CAPABLE OF BEING PRESENTED AS WITHIN THE FRAMEWORK OF THE PARIS AGREEMENT. I THINK THE NEGOTIATIONS BETWEEN THE RVN AND THE PRG WILL, PERHAPS, BE LONGER AND MORE COMPLICATED THAN YOU THINK.

END PAGE 02

6. THIS IS THE LONG WAY AROUND TO SAYING THAT I AM UNCERTAIN WITH YOUR FIRST QUESTION IN REFERENCE WHICH SEEMS TO IMPLY THAT THE PRG IS GOING TO TAKE OVER IMMEDIATELY IN SAIGON. IF THE TRANSITION TO BIG MINH CAN BE ARRANGED QUICKLY, I WOULD NOT THINK THIS WILL BE THE WAY IT GOES. IF THE PEACEFUL TRANSITION TO BIG MINH TAKES PLACE, I SEE NO REASON WHY THE UNITED STATES WOULD NOT KEEP AN EMBASSY HERE, ALTHOUGH IT WOULD BE ONE VERY LIKELY SHORN OF ANY MILITARY AIDE RESPONSIBILITIES EXCEPT A RESIDUAL ACCOUNTING FUNCTION.

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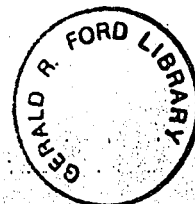
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AND WHOSE HUMANITARIAN AID RESPONSIBILITIES WOULD PROBABLY INCREASE.

2. YOUR SECOND QUESTION, HOW WOULD I PROPOSE WE DEPART IF WE DO, I THINK, IS A BIT PREMATURE. IF THERE IS AN ATTEMPT AT A MILITARY INVESTITURE OF SAIGON, THE ANSWER IS OBVIOUS. WE DEPART VERY QUICKLY. IF A BIG MINH GOVERNMENT TAKES OVER, IT WILL BE STILL THE REPUBLIC OF VIETNAM AND I WOULD ASSUME WE WOULD PLAY OUT THIS CARD FOR A CONSIDERABLE PERIOD. WE HAVE EVERY EVIDENCE THAT BIG MINH IS EXPECTING AND COUNTING ON OUR DOING THIS. (HXDA MATTER OF FACT, HE BORROWED \$1,000 FROM US THE OTHER DAY TO SEND TWO PEOPLE TO PARIS.)

3. THE ANSWER TO YOUR THIRD QUESTION, WHETHER, IF THERE IS A NEUTRALIST GOVERNMENT, THEY WOULD KEEP US THERE, I THINK IS VERY CLEARLY THAT IF IT IS A BIG MINH GOVERNMENT, THEY WILL WANT TO KEEP US. WHEN BIG MINH HAS SERVED HIS FUNCTION AS KEBENSKY, I WOULD STILL THINK THE NEXT SUCCESSOR GOVERNMENT WOULD ALSO WANT TO KEEP US HERE. IN THIS CONNECTION, BOTH PRO RECENT PRESS ANNOUNCEMENTS AND PRIVATE INDICATIONS, OF WHICH YOU ARE OF COURSE AWARE, GIVE THE SAME INDICATION. IT IS IMPORTANT TO NOTE THAT THEY ARE NOT REFERRING TO A "PRO GOVERNMENT TAKEOVER" IN SAIGON, BUT THEIR IDEAS OF WHAT THE FUNCTIONS OF AN AMERICAN EMBASSY IN SAIGON IN THE FUTURE SHOULD BE.

4. I AM VERY MUCH AWARE AND COMPLETELY AGREE WITH THE CAUTION CONVEYED IN YOUR PARA 2. SO FAR, WE HAVE THREADED OUR WAY THROUGH THE ONGOING POLITICAL TALKS AMONG THE VIETNAMESE WITHOUT BEING ACCUSED BY ANYONE THAT WE ARE THE DRIVING FORCE IN THE POLITICAL EVOLUTION THAT IS TAKING PLACE. I UNDERSTAND YOU ARE REFERRING TO THE POLITICAL TALKS BETWEEN THE GVN AND THE PRG. WHILE I AGREE IT WOULD BE BETTER IF THEY TAKE PLACE IN PARIS, WE ARE NOT, AFTER ALL, IN A POSITION TO CONTROL WHERE THE GVN AND

END PAGE 05:
THE PRG DECIDE TO TALK. I HAVE LONG FELT, AS YOU WELL KNOW, THAT OUR PARTICIPATION IN SUCH TALKS SHOULD BE MINIMAL AND THAT THE ACCOMMODATIONS WHICH MUST BE MADE MUST BE MADE ONLY BETWEEN THE TWO VIETNAMESE PARTIES. I DO NOT CONCEIVE OF OUR HAVING ANY TALKS WITH THE PRG HERE, OR IN PARIS FOR THAT MATTER, OR ESSENTIALLY THE POLITICAL ELEMENTS OF GVN/PRG DISCUSSIONS. WHAT CONTACTS, IF ANY, OCCUR IN SAIGON BETWEEN THE U.S. AND THE PRG WILL, IN MY VIEW, BE CONFINED TO A LISTENING BRIEF ON OUR PART AND REFERENCE TO WASHINGTON FOR DECISION.

10. WE ARE GETTING OUT MORE AND MORE OF THE HIGH RISK PEOPLE. WE COULD HAVE DONE A MUCH TIGHTER CONTROLLED JOB IF WE HAD NOT GOTTEN CAUGHT UP IN THE OLD MCNAHARA NUMBERS GAME IN WASHINGTON ABOUT THE U.S. PRESENCE HERE, WHICH HAS STRIPPED US OF SUFFICIENT PERSONNEL TO MANAGE. I WONDER IF YOU HAVE ANY IDEA WHAT IT TAKES TO EVACUATE ALMOST 30,000 PEOPLE. WHAT HAS BEEN ACCOMPLISHED HERE

RECALLED
PAGE 05

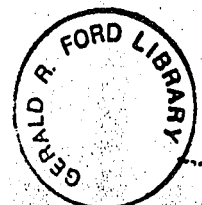
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12. WITH THE WARMEST PERSONAL REGARDS,
MARTIN
END OF MESSAGE

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